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RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000667

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2019

TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH GENERAL STAFF INTEREST IN REACHING OUT TO  
KRG

REF: ANKARA 625

Classified By: Amb James F. Jeffrey for reason 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

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¶1. (C) In a wide-ranging May 5 discussion with Ambassador and ODC Chief, General Hasan Igsiz, Deputy Chief of Turkey's General Staff said that Turkey's military was ready to explore new levels of engagement with the "local authorities of northern Iraq." (Note: while Igsiz would never utter the words "Kurdistan Regional Government," it was at all times clear to what and to whom he was referring, helped by occasional half smiles and semi-winks. End Note.) Igsiz said that the TGS was now convinced that the KRG shared the goal of getting rid of the PKK, but did not know how to proceed. We expect this to be an important topic of discussion during the May 26 Turkey - Iraq - U.S. trilateral security meeting, which will be held in Ankara. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador's May 5 meeting with Igsiz served as a follow-up to the discussion over an April 25 dinner between CJCS ADM Mullen and Turkey's Chief of Staff Gen. Basbug. Both the Ambassador and Igsiz were present during that discussion, and both sought to make the high-level discussion a more regular event. The Ambassador reviewed for Igsiz key points of ADM Mullen's brief to Gen. Basbug, stressing that the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq and the shift in mission of U.S. forces there was still very much on track. He noted that a senior inter-agency U.S. policy group was currently in Ankara and that while they would engage primarily with civilian counterparts, a TGS representative would participate in a meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador told Igsiz that the new U.S. Administration's team was well aware of Turkey's contributions to stability in Iraq and would continue to look to Turkey to be an important mentor for Iraq's development.

¶3. (C) Igsiz was ready to engage on Iraq. He repeated the GOT's concern that if the PKK is not destroyed or thoroughly dismantled before the U.S. leaves Iraq, the government of Iraq will be powerless to deal with it. Igsiz called attention to General Basbug's April 29 press conference (ref) in which he referred for the first time in public to the "local authorities of northern Iraq," which, according to Igsiz, was a major step for the General Staff. He said that now that the CHOD had broadened the ground rules, the TGS would be willing to engage closer with the "local authorities." He asked how the U.S. would view such an approach. The Ambassador said that we welcomed Turkey's increased contact with the KRG and admired the GOT's renewed push to have a comprehensive approach -- including political

and economic strategies as well as a military strategy -- to combating the PKK. The Ambassador told Igsiz he would contact the new U.S. Ambassador in Baghdad for his views on greater TGS engagement with the KRG.

14. (C) Igsiz said that each time Murat Ozcelik, Turkey's Special Envoy to Iraq, returns to Turkey, he brings messages from Massoud Barzani with requests that the TGS and the KRG be in direct contact. Igsiz remains skeptical of Barzani's intentions, but now he is at least convinced that Barzani wants to get rid of the PKK. What remains unclear to the TGS, said Igsiz, is precisely what steps the KRG would be willing to take to achieve this goal. He noted that while ADM Mullen was not prepared to take any U.S. military action against PKK in northern Iraq, General Igsiz speculated that if the "local government of northern Iraq" were willing to take such an action -- even once -- it would send a powerful signal to the PKK. The Ambassador said that the upcoming May 24 - 25 working group meeting in Ankara of the Turkey - Iraq - U.S. trilateral security dialogue would be a good opportunity to engage on this subject.

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Jeffrey